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RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 0032
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0079
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 0016
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 000197

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (PERRY)

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TAGS: ENRG KZ PGOV PINR PREL TX ZF

SUBJECT: A/S BOUCHER MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENTS NAZARBAYEV,
SAAKASVILI, RAHMONOV AND PRIME MINISTER ERGOGAN: GO SLOW

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Jennifer L. Brush for reasons 1.
4 (B) and (D).

Summary

11. (C) Presidents of Kazakhstan, Georgia and Tajikistan, in separate February 14 meetings on the margins of the inauguration of Turkmenistan's new President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, provided South Central Asia Assistant Secretary Boucher a uniform message on the need to go slow on

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pushing for democratic reform in Turkmenistan. The three agreed that Berdimuhamedov was not informed enough or capable enough to absorb the enormous challenges he faced in building a modern nation state out of Niyazov's dysfunctional feudal kingdom. Still all three, as well as Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, encouraged the United States to stay actively engaged with Turkmenistan. End Summary

Kazakhstan a Beacon of Economic Reform....

12. (C) Kazakhstani President Nazarbayev told Boucher that Berdimuhamedov clearly was not completely in control and his face showed it, Berdimuhamedov "didn't look happy," according to Nazarbayev. He added he thought there would be some changes in the cabinet, but was not specific. Nazarbayev said he did not expect any real change anytime soon but said he hoped Turkmenistan would cease being such a recluse and would open up more to the world and its neighbors. He pledged Kazakhstan's support, saying Kazakhstan played a unique role of providing a beacon of economic reform, providing a model for all in the region. Nazarbayev was particularly critical of the pageantry surrounding the inauguration, calling it "retro Soviet," as

well as indicative of how little Turkmenistan had developed since independence. Boucher noted Kazakhstan's distribution of its oil wealth to the people and suggested we urge Turkmenistan to use its oil money to create a scholarship program for young people to study abroad.

....And Soon to be a Model of Political Reform

¶3. (C) Thanking President Bush and Secretary Rice for his visit to the United States Nazarbayev said the US would be very pleased with his upcoming speech on democratic reform. Nazarbayev said he had received and studied the "Report on Democratization," and would introduce elements of the report in his speech, in particular support for multiple political parties and an independent judiciary. Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan was ready to become a model in Central Asia for political reform as well as economic reform. He dismissed, however, the need to develop a need for independent media, saying media in Kazakhstan already were free and independent and, indeed, frequently could not be trusted.

Uzbeks and Russians

¶4. (C) Nazarbayev cited Uzbekistan and Karimov as being especially destabilizing for Central Asia. He said he was impressed that Karimov had managed to alienate both the United States and Russia. According to Nazarbayev, Uzbekistan's decision to discontinue the transmission of energy to and from Tajikstan across Uzbekistan was damaging and unwarranted.

¶5. (C) Turning to Russian President Putin's February 11 blast against the United States, Nazarbayev said, "if that's the way he talks to you, you can only imagine how he talks to us (former Soviet republics)." According to Nazarbayev,

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Putin had to be handled very carefully because "he's an emotional man." Nazarbayev thought Defense Secretary Gates' response was perfect -- both measured and appropriate.

Relations with the United States

¶6. (C) In response to A/S Boucher's offer to send a series of sector-oriented delegations to Kazakhstan, and that he himself planned to visit the week of February 26, Nazarbayev said these visits would be welcomed. (Note: Nazarbayev's assistant stopped Charge after the meeting and asked that notification of A/S Boucher's visit be transmitted via diplomatic note. End Note.)

¶7. (C) Nazarbayev said Kazakhstan welcomed U.S. assistance and would particularly appreciate help with industrialization to supplement the energy sector. He said he was looking to develop Kazakhstan's food processing industry.

¶8. (C) Finally, Nazarbayev asked for US support for its candidacy for the World Trade Organization, as well as for its candidacy for Chairman-in-Office at the OSCE.

Rahmonov on Turkmenistan

¶9. (C) Rahmonov's message on Turkmenistan was "don't push democracy too hard." A/S Boucher laid out our intention to cooperate in fundamental areas like education, technology, information and law, as we pressed for systematic change towards a more open system. Rahmonov welcomed this statement, emphasizing technology as an agent of change. He said that it was too early to predict how the leadership would settle out and his belief that Berdimukhamedov would move slowly because he has yet to consolidate power.

¶10. (C) On Tajikistan, Rahmonov pushed speed especially on energy projects. This winter is very tough, he said. There is only two hours of power available a day because Tajikistan can't get electricity. Uzbekistan has cut off gas supply and the electricity supply from Kazakhstan because the lines pass through Uzbekistan. "You talk about things, we have seminars, but you're not doing things quickly enough."

Boucher laid out progress on electricity exports to Afghanistan and Pakistan, and pledged to try to speed up work on bringing electricity from Kazakhstan through Kyrgyzstan. Rahmonov said a Tajik delegation will go to the World Bank on the 18th of this month. He asked for help from the United States on debt and energy projects. "You should take two or three billion dollars and build lines and hydro projects in the region." A/S Boucher reminded him that we don't build big projects, but could help Tajikistan create the market conditions for private investment.

On Russia

¶11. (C) Rahmonov warned that "some" (i.e. Russia and Uzbekistan) did not want to see stability in Afghanistan or the region because stability would open new routes to export gas outside of Gazprom channels.

And USG Relations

¶12. (C) Rahmonov thanked the USG for its assistance with border security counter-narcotics efforts and noted that as the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan continued to increase,

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the US needed to do more.

Saakashvili

¶13. (C) Georgian President Saakashvili said he looked for US support for Trans-Caspian gas exports, using the Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan model. He agreed with A/S Boucher that the new Turkmenistan leaders were unlikely to move quickly on new energy export routes. With Baku-Tblisi-Ceyhan, even Nazarbayev didn't sign up until presented with a specific proposal. We should do the same with Trans-Caspian routes and present them to both Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Erdogan

¶14. (C) Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan began by asking about the "Armenian genocide" resolution, which he fears could have serious repercussions for the strategic relationship between Turkey and the United States. A/S Boucher told him that we were working with the Congress and that the Secretary and the President were personally involved.

¶15. (C) On Turkmenistan, Erdogan emphasized that Turkey will be heavily involved here through government and business. He stressed the need for all of us to be involved here in education and in moving Turkmenistan to a more open society and economy.

¶16. (U) A/S Boucher has cleared on this cable.
BRUSH